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ABRAHAM, MOSES, JESUS AND GABRIEL IN THE
QURAN.

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It is purposed in this article to present some summary statements embodying the material furnished by the Quran concerning the Bible characters, Abraham, Moses, Jesus and Gabriel.

ABRAHAM.

Abraham was one of the six great prophets to whom God delivered special laws. He was not an idolater notwithstanding the fact that the cultus of the district in which he was brought up consisted in the worship of the heavenly bodies. His investigation of the nature and properties of these, led him to abandon Sabianism, and to labor for its overthrow. He began his work at home by trying to convert his father. His pleading was in vain. His father grew angry and threatened to stone him. The threat did not alienate his feelings, for he continued praying in behalf of his father until it was revealed to him that his intercession would not avail. His hostile attitude against the gods and the established religion was inconceivable to his acquaintances, and they doubted whether he was in earnest. They were not kept long in doubt. Going to their temple he demolished the images with the exception of the biggest, which he purposely spared. The offender, when he was found out, was called to give an account of his audacious deed. With remarkable sagacity he laid the blame on the surviving god. This answer silenced them for the moment. In a short time, however, their vindictive feelings were incited, and they determined to burn him. Their revengeful purpose was thwarted by the interposition of God. This incident seems to have its origin in a misunderstanding of the word *Ur*. So the expression, *Out of Ur of the Chaldees*, was rendered, *Out of the fire of the Chaldees*.

At the direction of his Lord, Abraham left the place of his nativity and went to a place that was appointed for him. His relation to God was peculiar. He was notified of the doom of the wicked people of Lot. When he noticed that the messengers did not touch the roasted calf which was prepared for them he grew suspicious. Thereupon they disclosed their errand. Sarah laughed at the announcement, but the compassionate Abraham began to plead in behalf of the doomed people. The sentence, however, was irrevocable. The time of their destruction had come. The visitors had another message to communicate to their host, viz., the promise of a son. By reason of the advanced age of her lord and herself, the promise was almost incredible to Sarah. The promise in due time was fulfilled, the son was born. When he had attained to years of discretion the command was given to his father to sacrifice him. Submitting to the will of God he said to his father, "Do what thou art commanded."

The necessary preparations having been made, the obedient son was laid upon the altar. Nothing more was needed. Abraham had stood the test. He had shown his readiness to fulfil the most extreme command, so God interposed, substituted a noble victim for the youth, and set his seal of approval on the devout deed.

When the Kaabah was appointed a place of resort for mankind, a spot in it where Abraham's footprint might be seen, was selected as a place of prayer. Together with Ishmael he was commissioned to purify the House from the idols that were within and around it. Abraham had once a controversy with an unbeliever. The dispute turned on God's unique power. The unbeliever who claimed equal power with God was foiled. Notwithstanding his strong faith, Abraham had at least one moment of weakness, viz., the moment when he requested God to give him a proof of the resurrection. No blame, however, is attributed to him for making such a request. His character was so worthy in God's sight that he was constituted a model unto mankind, and the lifework of Mohammed consisted in calling the people back to the ancient religion, the religion of Abraham.

MOSES.

Moses was born at the time when the command of Pharaoh to slay the male children of the Israelites was in force. His mother was directed by God to cast him into the river, with the assurance that he should be restored, since he was destined to play the important role of an apostle. She placed the child in an ark and obeyed the direction given her. The life of the child, who in some mysterious way had reached the presence of Pharaoh, was spared at the suggestion of the Queen. He refused to suck the Egyptian nurses, so the proposal of his sister Miriam, who had kept close watch from a distance, was accepted. In this providential way he came again under the cherishing care of his mother. After a while, we are not told how long, he was taken into the court. When he had grown into manhood he was one day in the city and witnessed a fight between an Egyptian and a Hebrew. In compliance with the Hebrew's request for help he killed the Egyptian. Reflecting on what he had done he saw the doing of Satan in the affair, asked God for forgiveness, and was forgiven. On the morrow the Hebrew was again in difficulty and seeing Moses he appealed for help. Instead of giving help Moses reprimanded him. This refusal aroused his anger and he brought the charge of murder against his rebuker in the form of a question, Dost thou intend to kill me as thou killedst a man yesterday? By this time the occurrence of the previous day had reached the ears of the magistrates. Fearful of the consequences of his deed, Moses left the country and fled in the direction of Midian, praying as he went, for deliverance from the unjust people and for direction in the right way. On his journey he came to a well where a company of shepherds were watering their flocks. Two maidens who waited close by drew his attention. On learning the reason of their waiting he undertook to water their flocks. When the task was over, the maidens returned home. Before long, however, one of them brought an invitation to the stranger from her father. He accepted it and went with her. The adventures of his guest won the sympathy of Shu'aib, and his daughter's affection, so that the

guest became a son-in-law. Nothing is said of Moses after this until he was about to leave Midian. As he was one day with his family in the sacred valley of Tuwa he noticed fire and drew near unto it. A voice informing him of the sacredness of the spot on which he stood enjoined him to put off his shoes. It was there and then that he received the commission to emancipate Israel.

Being directed to cast his rod to the ground he obeyed, and it moved as if it were a serpent. Then he was told to put his hand into his bosom, and doing so, it became white. Notwithstanding these special signs he was unwilling to undertake the appointed task. He was afraid that the Egyptians would accuse him of falsehood, he suspected that the slaying of the Egyptian would bring him to trouble, he supposed that his lack of eloquence rendered success in such a work impossible. God refused to accept his excuses, so finally he yielded on condition that his brother should go with him. In company with Aaron he went to Egypt, appeared before Pharaoh and commanded him to set the Israelites free. To prove his right to make such a demand he wrought the signs furnished to him by God as credentials. Hereupon the chiefs of Pharaoh declared him to be an expert magician, and intimated that back of the demand was a scheme to dispossess the king. Hence they advised that he should be put off with fair promises so as to give time to bring together the skilful magicians of Egypt. On the appointed day the magicians made their rods run about like serpents. Moses was dismayed at this feat, but after receiving the divine assurance of victory he also cast down his rod, and, lo! it swallowed the rods which had been apparently changed into serpents. Though Pharaoh and his magicians were thus defeated, they were not yet prepared to let the Israelites go. As a result they were punished with flood, locusts, lice, frogs and blood. At length the time which God had granted them for repentance expired, and Moses was directed to lead the nation out of Egypt by night, to strike the waters of the Red Sea with his rod, so as to make a dry path for them. Thus under the leadership of Moses they crossed in safety but their pursuers were drowned. When

they arrived at Mount Sinai, Moses was called to the mountain to meet God. At God's appearance the mountain was reduced to dust. Tablets written with the divine finger were delivered to Moses with the following remark, "Receive this with reverence, and command thy people to live according to its excellent precepts." On his return to the camp he got angry at the people for making a golden calf in his absence, dashed the tablets to the ground, and dragged Aaron by the hair. He caused the calf to be reduced to dust and to be scattered in the sea. Having thus destroyed the image he pressed the people to show their abhorrence of the idolatrous deed by putting the transgressors to death. The man who could utter such a command must have occupied an exalted position in the estimation of the people.

JESUS.

Several titles are applied to Jesus, viz., The Messiah, The word of God, The word of truth, A spirit from God, The messenger of God, The servant of God, The prophet of God. His birth was miraculous. It was foretold to his mother Mary, who was a daughter of Imran and a sister of Aaron. At the time of his birth his mother was under a palm-tree in a distant place, whither she had retired for privacy. When she returned with the child unto her people, they began to remonstrate with her for what appeared to them a violation of chastity. The charge was at once repelled by the child. He was endowed with the power of performing miracles, which he utilized even in his childhood. A form of a bird which he had made out of clay was animated by his breath. He gave sight to the blind, healed the leper, and raised the dead. These deeds, wonderful as they were, were regarded as sorcery by the Jews. Thus he failed in the object of his mission which was threefold, viz., (1) the confirmation of the Scriptures, (2) the modification of some of the requirements of the law, and (3) the recalling of the Jewish nation to the true service of God. In the execution of his mission he was supported by his apostles, who of their own accord had answered to his call for helpers.

The fierce opposition to Jesus on the part of the Jews de-

veloped into a plot for his life. They went successfully through the process of crucifying him as they supposed. But God frustrated their plot, so that the person whom they crucified was one who resembled Jesus in appearance. God had taken Jesus to himself. Notwithstanding the distinction conferred by God upon Jesus he was not divine, and those who associate him with God are unbelievers who are to be sorely punished for their impious assertions. He was only an apostle, strengthened, it is true, with the Holy Spirit, favored with the gift of prophecy, and appointed for an example unto the children of Israel. He made no higher claim than this, and he is represented as saying in the last day that he is free from assailing the doctrine of God's unity.

GABRIEL.

The part which Gabriel plays in the Quran is very important. It was through him that Mohammed received his revelations. When the charge was brought against him of forming revelations to suit his own purpose he was not slow to assert that each revelation was genuine, brought down from the Lord by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit referred to was Gabriel, who appeared twice to the prophet in a natural form. One of these occasions was the famous "Night Journey;" the other at the lote-tree beyond which there is no passing, when Mohammed was told, "Read in the name of thy Lord, who created man from congealed blood. Read, for thy Lord is most gracious, who taught the pen, taught man what he did not know."

There was a virtue in that with which Gabriel came in contact. The calf-worshiper Samiree when questioned by the incensed Moses as to the motive which led him to make the calf made the following reply, "I beheld what they beheld not, and I grasped a handful from the footprint of the messenger and cast it." This seemed to him a satisfactory reason, for was he not thereby acting in accord with an inspired suggestion?

It was Gabriel that announced to Zechariah the promise of John and to Mary the glad tidings of a Word from God, whose name should be Messiah Jesus.